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things. I would say that *THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING* is fine, also that *The Trained Nurse* is fine, and I read them both a great deal.

"I have been greatly benefited by this Congress. My mind has been broadened and I am confident that I am better able to go out and be what a trained nurse of to-day should be, because of it."

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## PRIVATE NURSING \*

By MARGARET L. ROGERS

Superintendent of Nursing, Bridgeport Hospital, Conn.

OF all the professions now open to women there is none possessing the possibilities of nursing. The deeper our medical men penetrate into the science of medicine, the wider grows the horizon of the trained nurse.

Scarcely a quarter of a century ago the physician regarded her advent with a feeling of distrust, fearful that as soon as her training was completed she would proceed to the practice of medicine and in time share, if not entirely absorb, his circle of patients. Time has proved the fallacy of that idea, until to-day the reputable physician refuses to take a serious case unless the responsibility is shared by a competent nurse.

As a character-builder the training-school has no equal; I think it is its prevailing atmosphere of unselfishness which causes all the tiny germs of good that have long lain dormant in our natures to develop and helps us in time to overcome our most glaring errors. The regular routine, the unity of purpose, the absolute rule of willing subjects, leave their mark for all time upon the character and disposition of its pupils; and they must, because of this discipline, go forth better women, better equipped for the battle of life, whether to grace homes of their own or to become the temporary members of the homes of the suffering.

In the present day there are many fields in which the nurse may find an outlet for her activities. The need of hospitals, the demand in the army, and the increasing growth of district and settlement work give a choice of usefulness unknown to her sister of a few years past. However, it is in private nursing that the large majority find an opening most suited to their capabilities. The reason for this is because of the great pleasure in personal ministration. In other branches of the work, owing to lack of time or the inability to be in many places at the same time, one's work is apt to become largely that of the teacher and the guide, and the joy of personally making "a little comfortable the uncomfortable way" is seldom tasted.

\* Read at the International Congress of Nurses, Buffalo, September 18-21, 1901.

From the financial stand-point the private nurse is paid better than any other; if she is an active worker, she can be busy from nine to ten months in the year. She has the advantage of being absolutely free when she is free. Unfortunately, she cannot ever hope to increase her salary; she is worth as much when she takes her first case as when she takes one ten years hence. While experience adds greatly to her worth, it does not add to her financial value. The most she can ever hope to do is to "become established,"—to have her own little coteries of patients and physicians to whom she is absolutely indispensable.

In the larger cities in this country the remuneration for private nursing is almost uniform, twenty-five dollars per week, or four dollars per day, being the average salary. Some nurses, and, indeed, some hospitals, ask thirty dollars per week, or five dollars per day, for nursing male patients, still others make a distinction in obstetrical work, and I think all nurses in all places make an extra charge for contagious cases. In the smaller cities prices range from eighteen dollars to twenty-one dollars per week, but as living expenses are comparatively lower the difference is not so great as it appears at first thought. The question of hours is still worth considering. The nurse in the large cities does not feel this to any great extent, as in almost all cases requiring care at night twelve-hour duty is an established custom.

But in the smaller cities even people who can afford all sorts of luxuries feel that unless a nurse's training has done away with the necessity for sleep it has failed in its purpose. A few days ago I heard a physician remark that Miss B. was an excellent nurse, as she had gone seventy-two hours without sleep. Of course, he was a very young physician.

Nurses, no matter where their homes may be, usually locate in the city where they have taken their training. It would almost seem, when we consider the large classes which are graduated annually in hospital centres, that the supply would be greater than the demand. But this is not the case; the demand is constantly on the increase.

The family of moderate income, which a few years ago did its own nursing, now finds it impossible to get along without trained assistance. The family of affluence, which formerly employed one nurse, now finds it necessary to employ two or three. So that while hospital and club registers show an increased number of graduates on their lists, they show a corresponding increase in the number of calls.

The larger cities possess the attraction of affording a greater choice of work. Indeed, it is becoming popular to take up special lines of work. The movement has thus far met with the hearty approval of physicians and patients. It could hardly be otherwise, as the concentration of mind and effort in a given direction, if a nurse is at all progressive, must

result in an added usefulness, and at the same time these special cases would require sufficient regular care to prevent her from growing rusty in general work. "Nervous cases," "children's diseases," "gynæcological" and "obstetrical" work all afford opportunities for the "specialist."

Many young nurses from the smaller hospitals in the United States and Canada, ambitious to enlarge their views and come in contact with the "great in medicine," gravitate towards the larger cities and in time become members of the great army of workers. For such the private hospital and sanatorium afford the needed stepping-stones. These institutions employ only graduate nurses, and pay them a salary of about twenty-five dollars a month and, of course, living. This seems very small compensation for very hard work, but it supplies the means of present support and brings a nurse in contact with prominent physicians, who in turn become the medium through which she reaches her sick public.

The private nurse enjoys many advantages over other wage-earners. She is protected, and she is almost always brought in contact with refined, intellectual people, and is forced to talk of other things than nursing. We all have a tendency to get into the "professional rut," or, perhaps, it would be truer to say we are very deep in the "professional rut" when we leave the training-school, the world having narrowed down for most of us to the four walls of the hospital, and this coming in contact with other minds who are absorbed in social, religious, political, scientific, and philanthropic subjects stimulates our own intellects and, of necessity, widens our mental horizon. Of course, we occasionally come in contact with very unlovely people, for the snob and the parvenu are not exempt from bodily ailments. We should take this as a much-needed discipline to reduce us to a proper state of humility, for I think with continuous prosperous and pleasant cases most of us are apt to grow critical and exacting and "refuse to see the sun."

If you are a student of human nature or interested in "class problems," what a glorious opportunity for continuing your researches. You not only see how the other half lives, but you actually live like them.

The experience under doctors of different schools is pleasant and instructive. To our physicians we are simply individual nurses. To outside men we represent our school, and it is judged for or against according to our merits, so that there is a double incentive for well-doing.

The greatest disadvantage is the absence of home life, the never being able to make settled plans. Rooming conditions in this country, with the spasmodic boarding nurses are obliged to indulge in, are, indeed, not pleasant subjects for contemplation. The club will in time fill this most pregnant need. I have been fortunate enough to enjoy the privileges of one for a short time, and the refined, cultured home atmosphere with

which the nurses had succeeded in surrounding themselves was most agreeable and made home-coming a distinct pleasure.

Of its financial advantages I need not speak, as in this day of "com-bines" and "trusts" they are too apparent to need mention.

The question is often asked, What are the requisites to make the ideal private nurse?

To my mind there can be no fixed standard to which we can appeal, as the vagaries of taste are infinite and often quite inexplicable. Convention, education, accident, and idiosyncrasy all play an important part. I do think it is an absolute necessity to love and believe in your work in order to attain any degree of success in it. And why not believe in it? Surely outside of the home it is the noblest work left to women and requires a many-sided culture. The heights and depths of human nature must be within the range of your vision; you must have a knowledge not learned of books; a wide sympathy; the strength that springs from sympathy and the magnanimity of strength. You must be a doer of deeds preferably, not a speaker of words. You may not attain what the world calls success, but you will attain a truer success. It is not only what we have done, but what we have made of ourselves. If we have repressed our individuality, cultivated much selfishness, criticism, and gossip, and closed our eyes and our hearts to all altruism, then our lives have been failures and our influence, like all things false, will be suicidal and transitory, less than "the snow upon the desert's dusty face, which, lighting a little hour or two, is gone." To attain the truest success we must soak in the waters of unselfishness, be vitalized from within with a true love for our profession, and realize in ourselves the best we are capable of, and of she "to whom much has been given, much will be required."

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**A COLLECT FOR THANKSGIVING DAY.**

FATHER of Life, I thank Thee, too,  
For old acquaintance, near and true—  
For friends who came into my day  
And took the loneliness away.  
For faith that held on to the last,  
For all sweet memories of the past—  
Dear memories of my dead that send  
Long thoughts of life, and of life's end—  
That make me know the light conceals  
A deeper world than it reveals.

—EDWIN MARKHAM, *in the Boston Transcript.*